

2004

Looking Back

THE FRONTLINE

January 6, 2005

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Army names Stewart ... Community of Excellence

Patrick Donahue

Special to The Frontline

April 1

Fort Stewart officials got the word March 25 the post has been named the Army's Community of Excellence for 2004.

Janet Blanks, chief of plans, integration and analysis, and deputy garrison commander Paul Andershak, said the award carries with it a \$1 million prize to be used by the installation.

Fort Stewart officials had to submit documents detailing services and facilities and the process also includes Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria. The Baldrige Award, named for the late secretary of commerce under President Reagan, is given to businesses and organizations that show leadership and innovation in improving the way they do things.

"The criteria changes every year," Blanks said. "Every year, we work toward getting more effec-

tive and more efficient."

Five finalists were chosen for a personal inspection and an Army Community of Excellence team visited Stewart in December to see for themselves.

Any skepticism they had about Stewart's submission was laid to rest quickly.

"They don't always believe us," Andershak said.

"Everything we wrote in that document was true and accurate," Blanks said. "We made believers out of them."

The judges looked at the installation's leadership, human resources, financial process, how the post works to do things better and how it works with the civilian communities.

"We have always scored real high in (the civilian community) category," Blanks said, "because of the support we get from surrounding communities. Every time I ask for a meeting with

community leaders, it's amazing how many come out."

In their submission to the ACOE program, post officials detailed the organization of the base, its mission and its size. They also mentioned the joint land use study and the working agreements on the education center and Wright Army Airfield.

"All those are important," Andershak said.

The process also takes the community, the command and the families to buy into the process, Andershak said.

Andershak said the money will be used in a way that will benefit the majority of people on Stewart. When Stewart was a finalist the first time, the money it received went to buy and install the electronic readerboards along some of the main roads. The post was a runner up in 1997 and 2000.

"I am pleased the Department of Defense has chosen to recognize

the exceptional environment provided at Fort Stewart," said U.S. Senator Zell Miller (D-Ga.) "Fort Stewart provides its courageous men and women the support and conditions necessary to succeed on the battlefield, and their outstanding performance in Operation Iraqi Freedom is evidence of that. They played a key role in helping to deliver a people from an oppressive dictator and destroy a tyrant's brutal regime," he added.

Fort Stewart will receive its award during a ceremony May 6 and 7 at the Pentagon and is in line to receive the commander-in-chief's award for excellence. Torii Station, Okinawa, was the 2003 winner.

Editor's Note: Information for this story was compiled from Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management, Army Communities of Excellence Program and a press release from the office of Sen. Zell Miller.



Spc. Robert Adams

Maj. Gen. William G. Webster, 3rd Infantry Division commanding general, and John M. Kidd, Stewart garrison commander hold up the ACOE award at the awards ceremony held at Marne gardens.

Deserter found guilty



Spc. Ben Brody

Private Camilo Mejia being brought out of the courtroom after being found guilty of desertion.

Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.

1st Bde.

May 27

Staff Sgt. Camilo Mejia was convicted here May 21 of deserting his unit, C Company, 124th Infantry of the Florida National Guard to avoid hazardous duty.

A panel of four noncommissioned officers and four officers delivered a guilty verdict and gave Mejia the maximum sentence allowed by military law under a special court martial.

Mejia was sentenced to 12 months of confinement, reduction to the rank of private, forfeiture of pay and a bad conduct discharge.

While serving in Iraq, Mejia, a dual citizen of Costa Rica and Nicaragua, asked his commander, Capt. Tad Warfel, for leave to go home and take care of some green card issues, as he feared he would be deported upon returning home. Warfel agreed, and sent Mejia home for two weeks. Mejia vanished for five months, and turned himself in to military authorities in March after his unit had returned from Iraq.

The defense, led by Boston attorney Louis Font, put forth three motions to dismiss the case. The first motion was that Mejia was denied access to off-post meetings with his defense team. Font argued that under the sixth amendment, Mejia had the right to build a proper defense.

See DESERTER, Page 6A



Spc. Robert Adams

United Kingdom Prime Minister Tony Blair and Mrs. Cherie Blair meet students from Georgetown Elementary School, Savannah, Ga., waving American and British flags. The students gave Blair a gift basket with assorted gifts from Savannah.

G-8 brings world leaders to Savannah

Spc. Robert Adams

50th PAD

June 10

World leaders, meeting for the G-8 Summit at Sea Island, Ga., received a welcome ceremony after flying into Hunter Army Airfield June 8.

The ceremony included greeting officials, the playing of national anthems and a presentation of gifts from elementary school student.

"This is an awesome opportunity to greet them here on our beautiful coast, and to demonstrate the hospitality that Georgia affords its visitors," The Honorable Sonny Perdue, Governor of Georgia.

The ceremony started Monday evening with the arrival of President George W. Bush and Mrs. Laura Bush.

The greeting party

included national, state, and local government officials and Maj. Gen. William G. Webster, Jr., 3rd Infantry Division commanding general.

"It's been a huge honor for me to be able to represent all the 3rd Inf. Div. Soldiers at Fort Stewart, Hunter and Fort Benning. "It was also an honor for me to tell the leaders of these countries how proud we are to be serving the cause of freedom."

The countries that landed Tuesday for the G-8 Summit included the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Canada, Russia and the European Union. Also invited to the meetings were Iraq, Afghanistan, Bahrain, Turkey, Algeria, Jordan, and Yemen.

"I had the pleasure of

See G-8, Page 6A

Stewart to increase units by 66 percent

Sgt. 1st Class Marcia Triggs

Army News Service

Jan. 22

WASHINGTON — "It's like breaking China," said the commanding general who has proposed to make his division larger, diversify his brigades and turn all his Soldiers into riflemen.

Soldiers from the 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Ga., seized Baghdad and helped in the stabilization of Fallujah. They know what tactics work against an unconventional enemy, and what vulnerabilities make American troops targets.

Their task now is to turn their three brigades into five rapidly

deployable "brigade units of action" that are able to plug into any division and independently fight a high intensity conflict.

"The chief told me that he wants five maneuver brigades that look exactly alike to respond to all the needs of combatant commanders when a crisis occurs, and he said that he wants it to happen ASAP," said Maj. Gen. William Webster, 3rd Inf. Div. commanding general, referring to instructions given to him by the Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker.

Part of Schoomaker's instruction was to see if the reorganization could take place using existing resources within the division.

However, the proposal on the table now would cause the division to get larger by about 2,000 to 3,000 troops, said Webster. The brigade numbers would stay the same, but combat troops would decrease by about 10 to 15 percent, he added.

Each brigade unit of action will have one fewer company-size element and less artillerymen, Webster said. However, it will have more military policemen, better command and control assets to talk to each other over long distances, and more certified troops to call in close air support, he added.

The transformation of the mecha-

See REORG, Page 6A

11th Engineers get back to basics

Spc. Robert Adams

Staff Writer

April 1

Support Soldiers with Headquarters and Headquarters Company 11th Engineer Battalion conducted squad-level lane training and combative skills March 25 and 26 at training area E 19.

Soldiers changed leadership roles and strategically and tactically worked together to complete each of four mounted and dismounted lanes and one night lane while being attacked by opposing forces.

"The purpose for the training was for Soldiers to perform battle-focused training at the individual and squad level," said Capt. Jeff Thomas, HHC, 11th Eng. Bn. company commander.

Every squad conducted four two-hour day missions and one night mission. During these missions, they were subject to nuclear biological and chemical attacks and direct and indirect fire provided by opposing forces.

"We are providing small unit ambushes and hit and run attacks to harass each squad," said opposing forces leader Sgt. 1st Class Brian Raines, 11th Eng. Bn. operations noncommissioned officer in charge. "It helps Soldiers build a sense of accomplishment and confidence as they move in and make contact with the enemy."

At each lane, there is an observer controller to evaluate each squad and a lane walker to mentor them.

"My job is to look at the evaluation outlines and see how the Soldiers react to the four scenarios," said 1st Lt. Ramon Brigantti, HHC, 11th Eng. Bn. executive officer. What we are trying to accomplish is to give each squad a chance to react to different forms of contact and learn basic skills they are expected to perform at the National Training Center and on deployments, he added.

"As a lane walker, I name and give direction to the squad leader and make sure the Soldiers understand what is being taught," Staff Sgt. David Tarbox, HHC, 11th Eng. Bn. assistant brigade engineer NCOIC. I choose a squad leader for each mission based on how Soldiers are developing in the squad during each mission.

Every Soldier got the chance to lead during the training exercise.

"We switched up leadership roles for maturity," Thomas said. "There is no greater training than learning from your peers."

By changing leadership roles, it forces Soldiers to understand and use skills that will help them grow in their Army career, said Spc. Adam Kuykendall, HHC, 11th Eng. Bn. intelligence clerk.

"At each station these Soldiers encounter, they get better at operation procedures, rehearsing, timelines, executions," said 1st Sgt. William Lee, HHC, 11th Eng. Bn. first sergeant. Everything is going like I thought it would; Soldiers started out slow, and finished strong.

"These are the Soldiers of the future, so we want to give each Soldier the chance to learn and be in a leadership position, Lee said. "Each Soldier needs to be prepared to pick up the fight and complete the mission if the leader goes down."

On the morning of the 26th, these Soldiers practiced combative training against each other in case close hand-to-hand combat is needed to take down the enemy. Lee and Raines provided the instruction and each pair of Soldiers received tips on improving each move.

The training has been helpful, said Pfc. Josh Beckvar HHC, 11th Eng. Bn. support platoon driver. "We need to do it, so we are all on the same page in preparation for National Training Center and Iraq."

"It is very important because field exercises and NTC are training, but in war it is life or death, he added."

"The whole field exercise ran by itself," Thomas said. "Every Soldier should have (this) training a couple times a year and have fun doing it."



Photos by Spc. Robert Adams

Spc. Will Bumpers, HHC, 11th Eng. Bn. welder, runs to a rally point after artillery fire hit his squad. The company trained Soldiers at the squad level on dismounted and mounted lanes March 25 and 26.



Spc. Roy Childress, HHC, 11th Eng. Bn. cook, sprints with a squad automatic weapon during a movement across a field.



Spc. Adam Kuykendall, HHC, 11th Eng. Bn. intelligence clerk and Spc. Matthew Clifford, HHC 11th Eng. Bn. combat engineer, practice combative training Friday morning.



Spc. Joseph Adekun, HHC, 11th Eng. Bn. M-1 mechanic, positions himself in the perimeter so a member of his squad can conduct unmasking procedures.



(Left to right) Spc. Adam Kuykendall, Spc. Matthew Clifford and Staff Sgt. Robert Heard make a plan to remove an obstacle while taking enemy fire.

Given task, conditions, Soldiers test skills at ...

NTC



Sgt. Jonathan M. Stack

Bradleys set up a perimeter in defense of the 2/69 Armor, 3rd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. tactical operations center in the early hours of Jan. 20 at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., where 3rd BCT Soldiers are in the middle of a training rotation. The rotation is the first for the 3rd Inf. Div.'s BCTs since its return from Iraq. (See more NTC stories on page 9A)

VOICES AND VIEWPOINTS

In loving memory of ...

Losing an uncle, friend, Soldier, hero

Sgt. Jonathan Stack
50th PAD

At 12:30 a.m. April 11, I received the most upsetting news of my life — my father, a 26-year Army veteran, called to tell me my uncle Mike, a Special Forces sergeant major, was killed in an ambush over in Iraq. The news shocked me. I had to ask him three times what he said because I didn't understand. My uncle was very special to me. He helped raise me in my first five years in the Army, while we were both stationed at Fort Bragg, N.C. We were separated when I came to Fort Stewart and he and his family went to the Sergeants Major Academy.

Three days before my disturbing news he wrote me an e-mail telling me how well things were and that they weren't that bad.

The hardest part of all of this other than losing one of my heroes was listening to my father cry, as he told me what was thought to have happened to his only brother.

My uncle left behind a wife, two daughters and a son in their adult years, two sons, ages 3 and 5, another daughter, 7-years-old and three grandchildren.

Hearing the news reminded me why I joined



the military — to defend the freedom that my country gives me.

We (the military) have lost many troops in this war and hopefully it hasn't been in vain.

All of this just reminds me that we have Soldiers who, in a cowardly act, run back home and abandoned their troops. It seems to me that acts like that are a slap in the face and a disgrace to our country, citizens, troops and men and women who have died for this country.

All the people in the Armed Services joined knowing that there was a chance to go to war and also

die for their country. And it hurts me to know that there are people who, when this time comes, disgracefully go absent without leave, disappointing their fellow Soldiers, Marines, Airmen and Sailors.

My heart goes out to those who have been to Iraq, are still in Iraq, and those of us who will be there soon. It weeps for those who never made it back.

My aunt said, "He (my uncle) loved the Army and died doing what he loved."

Editor's Note: *The Frontline staff offers our condolences to Sgt. Stack, his family, and the families of all those who have lost loved ones in the war on terrorism.*

Happy New Year, everyone!

Spc. Emily J. Wilsoncroft
3rd Inf. Div.

Have you all made your resolutions?

Broken them already, huh? Fantastic, I knew I could count on you guys to renew my faith in the human tradition of making empty promises to oneself.

It would be great to actually be able to stick to a New Year's resolution, though, wouldn't it? I mean, I've sworn time and time again to better myself by winning millions of dollars in the lottery, but sadly, I've never been able to carry that one through.

Many people have criticized this pledge, believe it or not. They say, "Why would you resolve to do something that can only happen by chance?" and "Do you even play the lottery?"

To which I respond, "Because I can," and "No." In fact, I think mine is a perfect resolution, because I'm actually saving money (a common New Year's goal) by not buying a lottery ticket, plus, I'm not wasting time by resolving to do something else that I know I won't do, such as go on a diet.

I realize that I haven't been around as long as all of my readers (by the way, thanks to both of you for sticking around for another year), but I have learned something in my comparatively short life: whenever I vow to do something that I should — but don't usually — do, I inevitably spend more time making excuses for why I haven't done it yet than I spend on the actu-

al activity.

This is, of course, human nature. For example, I learned through a reliable Internet source that the first New Year's resolutions were made by the ancient Babylonians and were primarily based on returning borrowed farming equipment. I'll bet you money that the Babylonians who really did this were heavily outnumbered by those who sat around on their couches, sipping beer and thinking, "I'll do it right after I finish watching this ancient-equivalent-to-football game," or, "If the rain god hadn't been so angry last week, I would have taken it back then."

So, since I think it's frivolous to waste time telling myself that this year I'll exercise on my own time, save more money, get fewer speeding tickets and eat healthier, I've always thought it would be nice to have a couple no-obligation resolutions to fall back on.

You heard me — I said no-obligation resolutions. These are the ones that are unbreakable and will stop those obnoxious normal-resolution-keepers dead in their tracks.

These are the tried and true, and they've been good to me since I



began using them a few years ago. The obvious ones are things like, "I've resolved to not make a resolution," or "I resolve to continue smoking," but when those start to wear thin (Hint: they already have), more creative attempts may be called for.

Since you asked, I've got some of them right here, and you're more than welcome to try 'em out whenever someone asks you, in that holier-than-thou tone of voice, "So what's your New Year's resolution?"

•"This year, I will not mock babies."

•"I promise to dream when I sleep."

•"I'm going to make disparaging comments, out loud or to myself, about people I don't like."

•"I will either eat less or not eat less."

•"It's to not tell anybody what my resolution is."

•"I will do something that comes naturally to me, no matter what the odds."

These are just a few of my favorites, of course. Feel free to come up with your own, and by all means, share them with me. I'm sure the sarcasm flowing through my veins will run dry someday, and it's always good to have a reserve.

By the way, I realize that some of you report that you actually do keep your New Year's resolutions, and I speak from the heart when I say you're lying.

But hey, if fooling yourself into thinking you're keeping them is what you've resolved to do, carry on.

Oh, and by the way — have a great year.

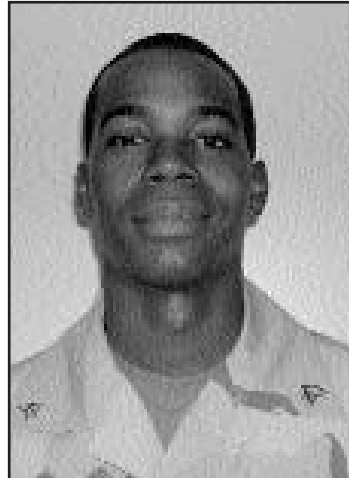
Marne Voice

THE FRONTLINE

Readers respond to the question:

"What was your greatest accomplishment in 2004?"

"The 1st Tank Crusaders basketball team that I coached in Korea made it all the way to the 8th Army championship games in Taegu, Korea."



Sgt. Aaron Bryant
A Co., 26th FSB



"I bought my first house located in Ludowici, Ga."

Sgt. Angela Wharton
A Co., 26th FSB

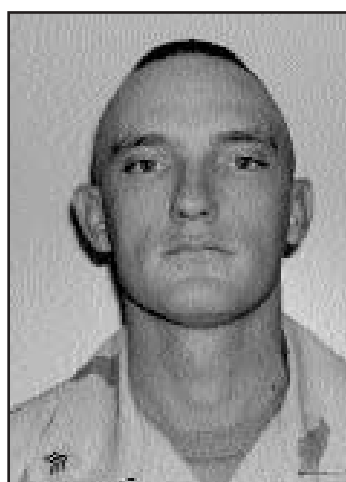
"I got promoted."

Sgt. Kiwanis Legette
A Co., 26th FSB



"I completed great training while at PLDC"

Sgt. David Lepard
A Co., 26th FSB



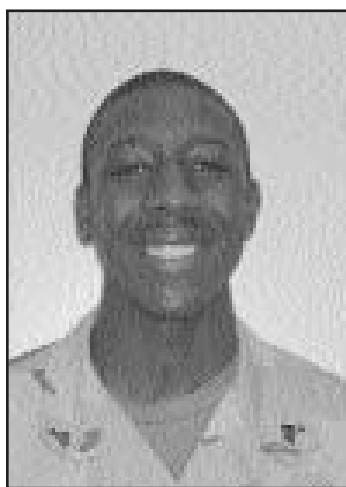
"I graduated from BNCOC."

Sgt. Lacrosha Penn
A Co., 26th FSB



"I fell in love with Vertrisa, who is also a Soldier here at Fort Stewart."

Sgt. Vernon Johnson
A Co., 26th FSB



50th PAD — Spc. Robert Adams

1st Bde. — Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.

2nd Bde. — Spc. Ben Brody

3rd Bde. — Pvt. James E. Lewis

4th Bde. — Pvt. Dan Balda

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2005 Basic Allowances For Housing Rates Anounced

The Department of Defense released the 2005 Basic Allowance for Housing (BHA) rates today, continuing the department's initiative of reducing military members' out-of-pocket housing costs. In total, the planned increase in housing allowance funds for fiscal 2005 above the fiscal 2004 amount is about \$2.5 billion. The 2005 rates represent the final phase of the planned buy down in out-of-pocket housing expenses. Other components of the increase are geographic rate protection and housing cost inflation.

Out-of-pocket expense, the portion of the typical member's housing cost that the member is responsible for, has been reduced from 3.5 percent last year to zero this year. The 2005 rates represent the final phase in a series of steps taken to bring the average member's out-of-pocket expense to zero by 2005. However, the actual expense for an individual may be higher or lower than that average, based on his/her actual choice of housing. Three components are included in the BAH computation:

• Median current market rent

• Average utilities (including electricity, heat, and water/sewer)

• Average renter's insurance

Total housing costs are calculated for six housing profiles (based on dwelling type and number of bedrooms) in each Military Housing Area (MHA). BAH rates are then calculated for each pay grade, both with and without dependents. An estimated \$12.3 billion will be paid to more than 910,000 service members in 2005.

Data are collected annually for approximately 400 MHAs in the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii. An important part of the BAH process is the cooperation from the services and local military housing offices in the data collection effort. Input from local commands is used to determine in what neighborhoods data is collected and to direct the data collection effort towards adequate apartment complexes and individual housing units.

For members with dependents, average increases in the BAH are approximately 8 percent. A typical E-4 with dependents, for example, will find his/her BAH about \$47 per month higher than last year. An E-8 with dependents will have about \$60 more in his/her paycheck.

An integral part of the BAH program is the provision of individual rate protection to all members. No matter what happens to measured housing costs, an individual member in a given location will never see his/her BAH rate decrease. This policy assures that members who have made long-term commitments in the form of a lease or contract will not be penalized if the area's housing costs decrease.

Geographic rate protection has also been provided to members. Geographic rate protection maintains a BAH rate at last year's level while the planned buy down in out-of-pocket expense is phased in. Geographic rate protection means that newly arrived members to an area will not see BAH rates that are substantially less than current members' rates.

The continual improvement in housing allowances represent the Defense Department's commitment to the preservation of a compensation and benefit structure which will provide members with a suitable and secure standard of living, that will sustain a trained, experienced, and ready force in the future.

Exchange Online Store Debuts "Build-a-Ring" Site

AAFES News Service

Special to The Frontline

DALLAS - The Exchange Online Store is putting convenience and value back into jewelry shopping with the new "Build-a-Ring " Diamond Solitaire Store. The new interactive store offers more than 5,000 certified diamonds that Exchange customers can mix and match to customize a ring that fits their specific budget and style. All diamonds featured on the site are certified by the International Gemological Institute.

" The " Build-a-Ring" online store has a user-friendly interface that makes it easy to create the ring of your dreams at a price you can afford," said Marketing Senior Vice President Mike Westphal. "Customized jewelry is no longer the domain of just the rich and famous. The eX Online Store 'Build-a-Ring' site makes it easy for anyone, on almost any budget, to purchase a made-to-order diamond ring."

Authorized Exchange customers can shop the "Build-a-Ring" Diamond Solitaire Store on the Internet at aafes.com, usmc-mccs.org, navy-nex.com or cg-exchange.com.

Shoplifting ... It's not worth it

Capt. Diane Weed

HD AAFES Public Affairs

Shoplifting is a crime that could cost a military member his or her career and a whole lot of money, too.

"Whatever excuses people come up with to justify their actions, the fact remains that none of them are good enough reasons to risk a career over,"said Steve Bass, HQ AAFES loss prevention manager.

Military exchanges spend millions of dollars each year to foil shoplifters, including measures to deter and detect thefts, according to Bass. As a result, the Army & Air Force Exchange Service apprehends more than 10,000 shoplifters each year, who are then turned over to base security and their units for criminal and Uniform

Code of Military Justice action.

On top of those actions, AAFES and other federal retailers, are authorized to collect a \$200 administrative fee on top of the value of the shoplifted item(s). This fee offsets the expenses AAFES incurs due to shoplifting.

The Civil Recovery Act, which went into effect March 1, 2002, allows the Army and Air Force Exchange Service to collect the flat administrative cost in addition to the value of the shoplifted items from those caught shoplifting in an AAFES store.

Sponsors are also financially responsible for their family members' actions, under the terms of the AAFES program. Parents of minors caught shoplifting will be billed for the costs.

These administrative charges are separate from any criminal prosecution or military disciplinary action.

"Unfortunately, when individuals steal, they commit a crime against themselves, their family members, other Soldiers and Airmen, and the military community," said Brig. Gen. Toreaser Steele, AAFES Vice Commander." It 's a real shame since they are taking money out of the hands of commanders who use the AAFES dividend to improve their quality of life. They seriously reduce the dollars given back from sales of this \$7.3 billion organization, that' s dedicated to ensuring the quality of life for all troops everywhere, going where they go and being of value to them everyday."

REORG

from page 1A

nized division will require more than requesting more troops and equipment; the Soldiers are in for some tumultuous times because they are going to have to break precious ways the Army used to do business to create a new organization.

"Soldiers don't mind breaking things," Webster said, "but in the beginning it will be difficult because there will be some frustration and confusion. It's not something that they can't do, but it will be a big challenge."

"They will need to get their equipment combat ready again. Junior leaders will have to learn a number of new tasks and then retrain a lot of new Soldiers. There will be engineers, medics, artillerymen and a host of other Soldiers who will be assigned to a brigade commander who is not accustomed to taking care of Soldiers with their job specialties."

Change has begun, and one of the first lessons learned from Iraq that is being implemented into the reorganization is making sure that every Soldier is comfortable being a Soldier first, Webster said. Soldiers must be confident and competent with their own weapons and be able to pick up their buddies' weapons, he added.

There is a program in place now where Soldiers will be shooting a lot more ammunition and using a lot more simulators than before, Webster said. Everyone from the journalists and the mechanics to the brigade commander will have the same level of confidence along with being able to live and defend themselves in the field from the front to the rear," he added.

"The enemy is learning from us," Webster said, "and they know that not all of our vehicles are armed and that not all of our Humvees are armored, and they're looking for vulnerabilities to strike with explosive devices and rocket-propelled grenades."

"So we want our Soldiers and their vehicles to exude a

fearless confidence that would make the enemy think twice before attacking a convoy or command post."

Webster is working with the Army staff to acquire more machine guns and grenade launchers to put on vehicles so on the battlefield there will be more crew-served weapons to attack or defend.

While in Baghdad the division had to secure high value assets and set up numerous checkpoints to prevent terrorist attacks. Security missions alone started to absorb Soldiers and equipment all over the city. Webster's goal is to train more Soldiers to fight, so that combat Soldiers don't have to be used to secure a service support unit.

Besides changes to training tasks, other challenges at the division level will be overcoming the chaos that will occur when every unit identification code is affected. UICs are alphanumeric codes that help supplies flow to units. It's a system that allows personnel actions to occur, training readiness to be recorded and money to be budgeted.

"We are going to perform a very complex process of moving property from one UIC to another," Webster said. "I predict that some parts we order for one company will show up in another company. We're just going to have to make sure that things don't go awry."

In order to make sure that this massive restructuring project meets the Army chief's guidelines, a division staff was created. Lt. Col Eric Wesley is the chief of Reorganization, G7, and he served as the division's executive officer during the push into Baghdad.

"We have a near-term mission," Wesley said, "which is to plan and then develop a course of action to increase our deployable entities and ensure that the division doesn't have to deploy every time a brigade-size element does."

"In the meantime, we must remain combat ready. We don't have the luxury of conducting tests, standing down a unit for an extended period of time and

experimenting."

This is not a 3rd Inf. Div. initiative, Wesley iterated. This is an Army initiative, and Training and Doctrine Command has the long-term mission, he said.

TRADOC was given the responsibility of focusing on Modularity, which is one of Schoomaker's 16 focus areas, Webster said. Modularity would give smaller units a degree of flexibility and more power.

The 3rd Inf. Div.'s role is more immediate, but will keep TRADOC informed to help them with their long-term Armywide reorganization plans, he said.

Previously, whenever there was a change to be made in the Army it would be handed to TRADOC to do an analysis and within a few years come up with and execute a plan, Wesley said. Now both organizations have parallel guidance.

Reorganize, train, tweak some more and go back and train some more until it's time to deploy again, is the direction Webster has from Schoomaker. The first newly formed brigade unit of action will be trained at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin Calif., in late February.

The first three brigades will be fairly easy to reorganize, but standing up the last two will take some time because more people and equipment are needed to make them whole, Webster added.

The 101st Airborne Division, Fort Campbell, Ky., commanded by Maj. Gen. David Petraeus, has the mission of reorganizing next. The 101st Abn. Div. has officially begun to redeploy their more than 18,000 troops after serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"What I have initiated to do for (Major) General Petraeus is to let him know what courses of action didn't work for us and what concepts caused the Army staff some difficulties," Webster said. "We will offer them anything that will help them start at a level further down the road than we started."

DESERTER

from page 1A

The second motion was that Mejia was not a citizen of the United States, and under a treaty with Costa Rica, no citizen of that country can be compelled to serve in the U.S. military. When Mejia reached his end of time in service date, under the stop-loss act he was subjected to compulsory service. Another law states a non-citizen who has not applied for citizenship cannot serve more than eight years in the military. Mejia said he felt as if the military had no jurisdiction over him after that time was up.

The third motion given by the defense was that Mejia was ordered to perform a duty that was against the law, and under the Geneva Convention he had the right to make a conscious decision to refuse to follow illegal orders.

All three motions were denied by Staff Judge Advocate Col. Gary Smith.

In every enlistment contract a Soldier signs, there is a section that states every Soldier may be subjected to a stop-loss for up to six months after his ETS. Mejia signed his enlistment contract and therefore was compelled to serve, Smith said.

The defense brought in Soldiers who served with Mejia in Iraq. All of them said he was a great leader and always took care of his men.

"From what I experienced, he was very truthful — I would trust him with my life," said Spc. Oliver S. Perez, a member of Mejia's squad. "He always reacted very bravely, and he was always in control of his men. He had the confidence to lead his men."

Mejia told the court that he had tried to bring the eight-year law to the attention of his chain of command, but could not get closure on the issue. He said he went as high as his battalion commander to solve his problem.

When asked by the panel why he did not go further up his chain of command, Mejia stated that because his battalion was an attached element, he did not know who his higher chain of command was.

"I thought I had every right to be discharged, but the government did not uphold the law," Mejia said.

Capt. A. J. Balbo, the lead attorney for the prosecution, asked

Mejia why he did not contact his unit after his leave expired, and why he hid from authorities in the Northeast until his unit returned.

"I did not feel that if I surrendered to military authorities I would be fairly tried," Mejia said. "I felt if I turned myself in I would have been punished and would not get any help from the military, so I looked for outside help."

"In his view he thought that the military had no jurisdiction over him, and that one day this matter would have to be settled in court," Font said.

"This case is not complex, in fact, it could not be simpler," Balbo said. "This case is about a deserter."

"The fact that he is a citizen of Costa Rica and a resident alien is not an issue," Balbo continued. "That is a slap in the face to all resident aliens who are serving now and are accountable for their actions."

After deliberating for a little more than an hour, the panel announced the guilty verdict.

"You may disagree with me, and I sit here convicted, but I believe I did the right thing," Mejia said. "You have the power to send me to jail, but I have to tell you from the bottom of my heart that I sit here a free man. From behind bars I will be a free man. I have no regrets, not one. I will take it because I will go there with my honor."

"When he made a conscious decision not to come back, he left his men behind," Balbo said. "He feels he did nothing wrong. He has no regrets. Even though he knows he abandoned his men, not once did he say 'I'm sorry.'"

Mejia was led from the courtroom in handcuffs by military police as his supporters cheered and clapped. He will be transferred to a military confinement facility.

"I am in pain for what has just happened, but I am not surprised," said Maritza Castillo, Mejia's mother. "The Army gave the harshest punishment, but my son is a free man. He followed the voice of his conscience."

"The defense counsel said he accomplished all his missions," Balbo said. "He did, except for the most important one — showing up."

G-8

from page 1A

telling the new President of Iraq that I was proud to be commanding the 3rd Infantry Division and the Soldiers that spear-headed the liberation of his country," Webster said. "He asked me to pass on to all Soldiers and families how much they appreciate our hard fighting and sacrifice to free their country."

After being greeted, each leader walked down the red carpet to hear their country's national anthem followed by the United States national anthem.

Each leader then got the chance to meet with and receive gifts from local elementary school students from the Savannah and Brunswick area.

To prepare for the French President

Jacques Chirac and Mrs. Chirac, students from Windsor Forest Elementary School in Savannah made clay dolls and pottery and presented an artist's print of downtown Riverstreet.

The Children learned about the G-8 Summit on the internet, and learned and studied some French words to prepare for today, said Richard Krauss, Windsor Forest principal. "I'm extremely excited to meet him," said Georgia Edwards, Windsor Forest teacher.

Many Soldiers and civilians on Hunter have been a part of the preparation and execution of this event.

"The Hunter task force provided the

installation and the logistical support for the G-8 Summit here on post and supported the secret service in security arrangements when needed," said Robert Close, U.S. Army Forces Command public affairs specialist.

"The teams that have been put in place for the event have performed remarkably," said Lt. Col. Jeffrey Goble, Hunter garrison commander. "Without a doubt our Soldiers have displayed a sense of calm, discipline and organization to what could have become a very chaotic event."

Leaders will meet and discuss world issues through June 11, in which they will then depart from Hunter.

Webster said, "Just to think these leaders



Spc. Robert Adams

Jacques Chirac, president of France, and wife Bernadette are greeted at Hunter by local area students.

can all meet around the same table may mean more peace and freedom around the world."

Contractor takes over access control at Stewart

Sgt. Jacob Boyer

Special to the Frontline

Members of the Fort Stewart community were greeted with a new site when they returned to work after New Year's Weekend: civilians at the gates.

Security guards employed by civilian contractor Akal Security and supervised by military police took over security duties for the post to allow the Soldiers who have been guarding the gates since 2001 to focus on training, said Donald P. Police, deputy director, Directorate of Public Safety. The switch to civilian guards is part of a Department of the Army initiative.

“The intent of this is to relieve the Reserve and National Guard units from the access control and security missions they were doing and get them back on their war-time missions,” he said.

The new guards allow about 160 Soldiers a day to focus on their units’ missions rather than garrison security, said Lana D. Wright,

chief, Strategic Plans, Operations, Training and Resource Division.

Having guards that work at the gates every day will also improve force protection at Stewart, Wright said.

“We won’t have to take the time to re-train Soldiers every 30 days when we get a new group,” she said. “They’re just not used to detecting behavior. With no turnover, the guards will become very proficient in their functions. They may identify behavior that has been permitted through because the person who was there was unfamiliar with it. The more you do the job, the better you get.”

Wright said the move to civilian security was rooted in the original switch to full access control of Army posts in Spring 2001.

“Soon after (the switch), a study was done for personnel, and it showed we needed either growth in the MPs or the shortfall would have to be compensated for by other personnel,” she said. “There were

not enough MPs.”

The terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 and the war in Iraq accelerated the need for guards on the gates, and studies showed it would be more cost-efficient in the long run to hire civilians to handle access control, Wright said.

In late September, Wright’s office was notified that funding was available for civilian guards and they would take over Jan. 4. Akal, a New Mexico contractor that handles security for several Department of Defense posts, was selected, and the company went about hiring the new guards.

The guards went through 40 hours of training, including identification of passes and permits, unarmed self-defense and use of force, rules of engagement, weapons qualification and assisting police in search and seizure and deploying equipment to access control points in the force protection condition is elevated, Wright said.

Wright said there had been “no major

complaints” from people who had encountered the guards at the gates.

“There have been some internal things that need work, but they don’t affect the driver,” she said. “It has all been things with policy and procedure that will get clearer as we go on.

In addition to the civilian guards, Department of the Army police will be working at Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield before the end of the year, Police said. They will work with the civilian guards at Stewart and take over all security at Hunter.

Wright said Maj. Gen. William G. Webster, 3rd Infantry Division commanding general, made it clear the guards were not “Rent-A-Cops,” and they should not be treated as part of one team in the garrisons force protection effort.

“Our goal is to make the difference between the guards and the DA Police unnoticeable,” Wright said. “It’s a partnership in process.”

3ID IN BRIEF

Stewart

Ski Beech Mountain

Busses depart from Stewart Leisure Activities Center, Bldg. 443 on Jan. 22 at midnight and return Jan. 23 at 10 p.m. Costs include motel, ski lift and equipment rental. Adults \$180, children \$140 and children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. For more information call 767-8609.

Universal Studios

Two day trip including transportation, 2-day attraction ticket and lodging is scheduled for Feb. 20. Adults fare is \$150, children \$90 and anyone under age 18 must be accompanied by an adult. Busses will depart at midnight from Bldg. 443. For more information call 767-8609.

Bowling and Golf

Free bowling and shoe rental at Marne and Hunter Lanes, 1 to 5 p.m. for Soldiers and family members. No golf fees at Taylors Creek and Hunter Courses from 1 to 5 p.m. Golf cart rental, \$7 per person for 9 holes or \$12 per person for 18 holes.

Indebtedness Claim

Anyone having claims against or who is indebted to the estate of Spc. George D. Harrison, 293rd MP Co., Fort Stewart, Ga, should

contact 1st Lieutenant Braden P. Stai, at 767-2186.

Red Cross CPR Instructors

If you are a current CPR/First Aid Instructor with the American Red Cross, you need to register with the Savannah Chapter - Liberty Branch to keep your certification current. You can call (912) 876-3975 or visit the local office in the Winn-Dixie Shopping Center between Goodwill and Pro-Feet for more information.

Finance Location Change

As part of the preparation for deployment in support of OIF III, the 3d Finance Company will provide finance support to garrison units, MEDDAC and DEN-TAC from the finance section in the finance section located at the Soldiers Support Center. All 3rd ID units will continue to receive Finance Support from the current Customer Service in Bldg. 9118 or the finance team located within the brigades. For more information call is Capt. Langley or Master Sgt. Ramsey at 767-4680/5724.

Library

Childrens story hour Wednesday, 1 to 2 p.m. For more information call 767-3753.

Town Hall Meeting

The meeting is scheduled Tuesday, 7 p.m. in the Hunter ACS ballroom.

Hunter Lanes

Special packages available such as “Kidz Fun Pack, \$5.95 for two games of bowling, shoe rental, hot dog, chips and soda.

Ski Beech Mountain

Buses depart from Hunter Outdoor Recreation Bldg. 8454 on Jan. 22 at midnight and return Jan. 23 at 10 p.m. Costs include motel, ski lift and equipment rental. Adults \$180, children \$140 and children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. For more information call 767-8609.

Jazzercise

Jazzercise programs are being offered at the Hunter Army Airfield Fitness Center Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9-10 a.m. Classes are free; sign up at any time. For more information call Lori O’Neill at 459-0161.

Universal Studios

Two day trip including transportation, 2-day attraction ticket and lodging is scheduled for Feb. 20. Adults fare is \$150, children \$90 and anyone under age

Hunter

18 must be accompanied by an adult. Busses will depart at midnight from Bldg. 8454. For more information call 767-8609.

Chip and Putt Clinic

Free clinic, Friday, Jan. 14 from 1 to 3 p.m. For more information call 352-5622

Martin Luther King

Fort Stewart and Hunter will host this year’s observance Jan. 18, 1:30 to 3 p.m. at Woodruff Theater. Guest speaker will be Honorable Claude M. Bolton, Jr., Assistant Secretary of Army.

AKO Account

The advantage of using AKO, to communicate with your spouse and loved ones, over the other sites such as Yahoo and MSN, is that AKO is a secure site. By sponsoring your spouse and loved ones with an AKO account, your communications back and forth will always be kept secure and confidential.

A simple step by step Power Point presentation can be located on the Ft. Stewart Internet in the New Items section <https://intranet.stewart.army.mil/default2.htm> or <https://intranet.stewart.army.mil/doim/businessdivision/AKOGuestPresentation2004.ppt>

Winn /Tuttle

Interested in volunteering?

Volunteers are always welcome and needed to help in general administrative and clinical areas. For more information about becoming a volunteer at Winn, call the Fort Stewart Red Cross Office at 767-2197 or Brigitte Roberts at 370-6903 or send an email to: Brigitte.Roberts@se.amedd.army.mil.

PX Pharmacy

The PX Satellite Pharmacy is now open for full service business. Patients may fill new prescriptions and refill prescriptions here 9 to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Update DEERS

Beneficiaries must keep their DEERS information up-to-date. Winn and Tuttle use DEERS information to contact you regarding referrals and appointments.

DEERS information can be updated by calling 1-800-538-9552, visiting: www.tricare.osd.mil/deers/default.cfm or stopping by Building 253.

TRICARE Phone Numbers

For general health care infor-

mation, you can call the Humana Military Audio Library at 1-877-217-7946.

If you have questions about TRICARE, you can call TRICARE at 1-800-444-5445 or the Health Benefits Office at 370-6633 or 1-800-652-9221.

Third Party Insurance

Individual’s social security numbers will no longer be displayed on health insurance cards in accordance with Georgia Senate Bill 721. Individuals with private health insurance should contact the Third Party Insurance Office at Winn upon receipt of their unique member identification numbers (policy numbers.) Call the Third Party Insurance Office at 370-6037/6947 for more information.

ER Remodeling

The Emergency Department will have minor disruption for remodeling. All emergencies and urgent care patients should still report to the ER. Non-emergency patients are encouraged to schedule appointments with their primary care manager.

Appointments, including same-day appointments, may be scheduled by calling 370-6633.

POLICE REPORTS

- **Subject:** Private 1st Class, 21-year-old male, 4th Bde.
- **Charges:** Fleeing the scene of a traffic accident, failure to obey traffic control device
- **Location:** Fort Stewart
- **Subject:** Specialist, 23-year-old male, 1st Bde.
- **Charges:** False official statement, malingering, conspiracy
- **Location:** Philadelphia, Pa.
- **Subject:** Sergeant, 23-year-old male, separate unit
- **Charge:** Driving while license revoked
- **Location:** Hinesville
- **Subject:** Private, 23-year-old male, separate unit
- **Charge:** Assault consummated by battery
- **Location:** Fort Stewart
- **Subject:** Private, 20-year-old male, 1st Bde.
- **Charge:** Assault consummated by battery
- **Location:** Fort Stewart
- **Subject:** Private 1st Class, 24-year-old male, Div. Sup. Bde.
- **Charge:** Malingering (self-injury with intent to avoid service)
- **Location:** Hinesville
- **Subject:** Private 1st Class, 24-year-old female, Avn. Bde.
- **Charge:** Public drunkenness
- **Location:** Savannah
- **Subject:** Private 1st Class, 20-year-old male, Avn. Bde.
- **Charges:** Driving while license suspended, no valid registration, no valid insurance
- **Location:** Savannah
- **Subject:** Private 1st Class, 23-year-old male, 1st Bde.
- **Charge:** Wrongful use of marijuana
- **Location:** Fort Stewart
- **Subject:** Private, 24-year-old male, 2nd Bde.
- **Charges:** Burglary, larceny of private property, wrongful damage to private property
- **Location:** Fort Stewart



- **Subject:** Staff Sgt., 37-year-old male, 1st Bde.
- **Charge:** Aggravated assault
- **Location:** Hinesville
- **Subject:** Private 1st Class, 22-year-old male, 1st Bde.
- **Charge:** Wrongful use of cocaine
- **Location:** Fort Stewart
- **Subject:** Specialist, 21-year-old male, 1st Bde.
- **Charge:** Wrongful possession of drugs (diazepam, morphine)
- **Location:** Fort Stewart
- **Subject:** Private, 23-year-old male, Avn. Bde.
- **Charge:** Wrongful use of marijuana
- **Location:** Fort Stewart
- **Subject:** 1st Lieutenant, 25-year-old male, 1st Bde.
- **Charges:** Speeding (80/55), no drivers license on person, no proof of insurance on person
- **Location:** Fort Stewart
- **Subjects:** 1st Sergeant, 37-year-old female, 1st Bde., Sergeant, 25-year-old female, separate unit, Private 1st Class, 20-year-old male, 4th Bde., Specialist, 24-year-old male, 4th Bde.,

- **Charges:** Marriage fraud, false official statement, conspiracy to commit marriage fraud
- **Location:** Hinesville
- **Subject:** Specialist, 24-year-old female, separate unit
- **Charges:** Driving while license suspended, speeding 67/55
- **Location:** Fort Stewart
- **Subject:** Private, 23-year-old male, Avn. Bde.
- **Charge:** Wrongful use of marijuana
- **Location:** Fort Stewart
- **Subject:** Private 1st Class, 20-year-old male, Avn. Bde.
- **Charge:** Wrongful use of marijuana
- **Location:** Hunter
- **Subject:** Specialist, 29-year-old male, Avn. Bde.
- **Charge:** Disorderly conduct
- **Location:** Richmond Hill
- **Subject:** Private 1st Class, 21-year-old male, 4th Bde.
- **Charges:** Wrongful possession of cocaine, wrongful use of cocaine
- **Location:** Fort Stewart
- **Subject:** Private, 18-year-old male, 1st Bde.
- **Charge:** Wrongful use of marijuana
- **Location:** Fort Stewart
- **Subject:** Private 1st Class, 22-year-old male, Fires Bde.
- **Charges:** Driving under the influence, open container, speeding (63/45)
- **Location:** Hinesville
- **Subject:** Specialist, 29-year-old male, Fires Bde.
- **Charges:** Littering on highway, open container
- **Location:** Hinesville
- **Subject:** Private, 22-year-old male, 2nd Bde.
- **Charges:** Possession of marijuana, speeding (75/55)
- **Location:** Hinesville
- **Subject:** Specialist, 25-year-old male, 2nd Bde.
- **Charge:** Dealing in firearms without a license
- **Location:** Hinesville

Courts-Martial

The following cases were tried by special courts-martial or general courts martial at Fort Stewart with the following results:

Special Courts-Martial

United States v. Pfc. Develle Banks, B Company, 3/7 Infantry, Fort Stewart, Ga. On Dec. 3, the military judge found Banks guilty failure to report, AWOL, wrongful use of marijuana and wrongful use of cocaine.. The military judge sentenced Banks to: be confined for 7 months, reduction to E-1 and a bad-conduct discharge.

General Courts-Martial

United States v. Pvt. Ryan R. Shewmake, 549th MP Company, Fort Stewart, Ga. On Nov. 30, the military judge found Shewmake guilty of assaulting a child under the age of 12. The military judge sentenced Shewmake to: be confined for 9 months, reduction to E-1 and a bad-conduct discharge.

United States v. Spc. Michael Sabol, D Company, 3/7 Infantry Fort Stewart, Ga. On Dec. 2, the military judge found Sabol guilty of conspiracy, three counts of larceny, and wrongful disposition of government property. Sabol sold on Ebay MREs and other military equipment that he stole. The military judge sentenced Sabol to: be confined for 60 days, \$6,000 fine, reduction to E-1 and a bad-conduct discharge.

United States v. Spc. Joseph Thomas, 4th BTB, Fort Stewart, Ga. On Dec. 6, the military judge found Thomas guilty of larceny and forgery. Thomas stole check from his roommate and cashed them for various goods and services. The military judge sentenced Thomas to: be confined for 8 months, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, reduction to E-1 and a bad-conduct discharge.

Marne TV

January 2005 Schedule

Marne TV can be found on Comcast Cable Channel 16 every weekday. Tune in to the Marne Report six times a day for the latest from Stewart and Hunter.

5 a.m. Army Newswatch	1 p.m. Air Force News
5:30 a.m. MARNE REPORT	4:30 p.m. Navy News
6:30 a.m. Air Force News	5 p.m. MARNE REPORT
7 a.m. Navy News	6 p.m. Army Newswatch
7:30 a.m. Army Newswatch	6:30 p.m. Air Force News
8 a.m. MARNE REPORT	7 p.m. Navy News
9 a.m. Air Force News	10 p.m. MARNE REPORT
9:30 a.m. Navy News	11 p.m. Army Newswatch
11:30 a.m. Army Newswatch	
Noon MARNE REPORT	MidnightMARNE REPORT

NTC

1/30 Soldiers learn the hard way

Spec. Emily J. Wilsoncroft
3rd Inf. Div.

Jan. 29
FORT IRWIN, Calif., January 21, 2004 — On their fifth day of training in the barren desert wasteland known as the National Training Center's "Box," 3rd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division (Mech.) Soldiers in Fort Benning's B Co., 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment were given a mission.

Despite all their best efforts, its outcome prompted some of those Soldiers to agree that it's a good thing this was just training.

"Our mission was to go into (the simulated town of) Langford Wells, find a certain individual who was on the most-wanted list and capture him," said Cpl. James Crocker, part of the second wave of infantrymen who arrived to assist their comrades. "Unfortunately, when the (role-playing) townspeople started firing at us that kind of went downhill."

After the Soldiers were attacked, the return fire that ensued became known as the Massacre of Langford Wells.

"A lot of people are still in the mindset that we're in Iraq, and that might have made us a little over-aggressive," said Pfc. Joseph Kinsley, another B Co. Soldier.

Crocker added, "In Iraq, the innocent civilians were quicker to surrender, to come out with their hands up if they weren't a threat to us. In Langford Wells, everyone just stayed in the houses, which is usually a sign that they're hiding weapons or something."

The week of force-on-force battle maneuver training Soldiers received while in the Box was set in terrain foreign to them.

They fought against an army played by Fort Irwin Soldiers trained and familiar with the desert's many hills, valleys, twists and turns.

All involved — including vehicles and the Soldiers acting as townspeople — were outfitted with laser transmitters for their weapons and laser-activated gear for their bodies which was set off when they were hit by enemy fire throughout the staged war.

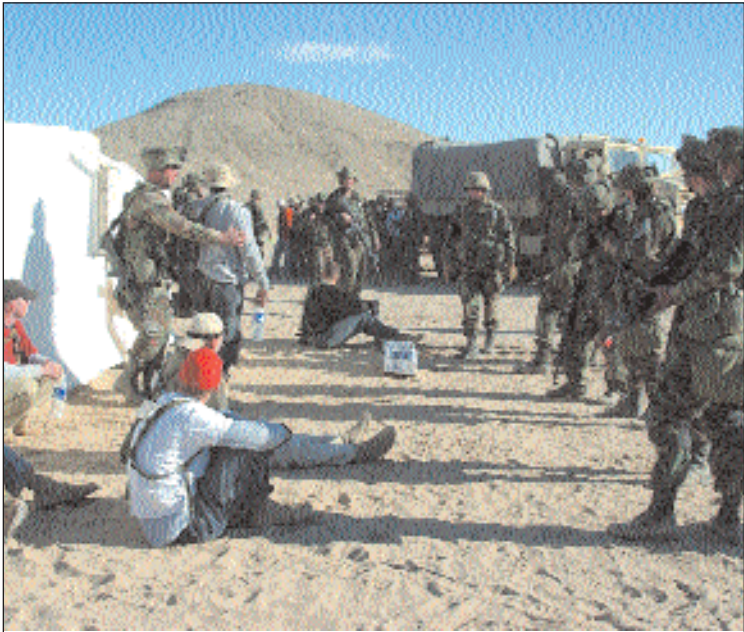
"Towns" were scattered throughout the region and filled with "residents" either hostile or friendly to U.S. forces, who were instructed to offer them help when it was requested and respond accordingly when treated with violence.

According to 1/30th Soldiers, the "citizens" of Langford Wells made a fatal error when they took the first shot at their would-be allies, an error that ultimately cost them close to three-quarters of their numbers, including the town "mayor."

"It was an exercise in tactics in an urban environment," Crocker said. "We had to determine which civilians were enemies and which were innocent."

He continued, "It went all right, but it's hard to restrain yourself when your adrenaline's pumping. Usually the civilians aren't as hostile."

Kinsley said he thought that overall, the scenario was "pretty realistic," emphasizing again that if the residents of Langford Wells had helped them dis-



Spec. Emily J. Wilsoncroft

B Co., 1/30 Inf. Soldiers detain Langford Wells civilians who survived the total annihilation of the simulated town Jan. 21 at NTC.

tinguish friend from foe, the body count may not have been so high.

"In Iraq, people who were innocent would come out waving white flags," he said.

"I think they're given those at birth over there," Crocker added.

Still, Kinsley said when he was being shot at, his first order of business was to return fire.

"I'd rather be judged by 12 than carried by six," he stated.

Those residents of the town who were not "killed" were detained, and, although their community had just been all but extinguished, most of those few remained compliant and cooperative with Soldiers

who arrived to carry them off to temporary captivity.

Kinsley said he would normally expect a much different reaction from people in their position.

"We just destroyed their home," he said. "If this were real, the detainees would probably be angry and throwing stuff at us. These guys just sit there and let us lead them away."

Before leaving the now-obliterated Langford Wells, once a poor yet gentrified settlement and now a virtual pile of rubble, Crocker and Kinsley said they and their fellow 1/30th Soldiers would chalk this experience up as a lesson learned — another educational day at NTC.



Sgt. Jonathan M. Stack

Pfc. Jeremy K. Posey, B Co., 1/15 Inf., looks through the scope of his squad automatic weapon after setting up the weapon's MILES gear.

Vipers thrive under 2nd Brigade at NTC

Spec. Ben Brody

2nd Bde.

April 22

In the dead of night at Task Force Viper tactical operations center April 8, five heavily armed Apaches and a Blackhawk suddenly came alive and took to the skies in search of their prey — opposition forces vehicles at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.

As the Blackhawk circled at a midpoint between the Apaches and the TOC to relay radio transmissions between them, the four gunships and observer Apache approached a host of targets designed to look like the lead element of an enemy counterattack force bearing down on the 2nd Unit of Action. The targets consisted of tanks, armored vehicles and artillery.

"We fired five laser-guided Hellfires at the targets — each helicopter moved in sequentially to take their shot," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Gary Fewins, an instructor pilot with B Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment. "You pull the trigger and about a second later — whoosh! The missile comes screaming out with a flash of light, then 15 to 20 seconds later it's just death and destruction on the ground. The Hellfire will destroy any vehicle known to man."

The targets at NTC are plywood, fitted with devices that generate smoke and light

to simulate muzzle flashes and the heat signature an armored vehicle produces. The Apache pilots fire a laser at the target, which the \$20,000 missiles precisely follow.

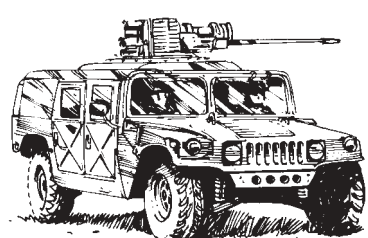
"Live fire is the best part of NTC for us, and the most realistic," said B Co. pilot Capt. Joe Amman, who flew on the mission. "It's what we're paid to do - fly and shoot in the dark, and blow stuff up."

The helicopters then returned to the TOC, loaded up with 30mm cannon ammunition, and flew off in support of Rogue 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment's live fire assault on enemy positions.

"We flew in for a close combat attack with the tanks and artillery, firing down the range with our cannons blazing," Fewins said. "It was awesome to see the line of tanks below us, huge dust trails behind them. NTC has the best target array I've seen."

The missions are the kind of perfect successes that the aviators have worked for the whole month at NTC, and are a testament to the effectiveness of the UA concept, according to Task Force Viper and 1/3 Avn. executive officer Maj. David Rude.

"This training really improved our awareness in an environment laden with terrorists, (improvised explosive devices) and civilians on the battlefield," Rude said. "We've learned a lot that we can take with us to Iraq."



JRTC

Joint Readiness Training Center



Spc. Ben Brody

A medic with 3/7 Cav. tries to help a badly wounded role player to his feet after treating his injuries.

3/7 Cav. medics train for war

Spc. Ben Brody

2nd Bde.

Sept. 23

There were screaming villagers, armed thugs, smoke everywhere, wounded civilians...seem like a difficult place to be a medic?

Precisely the point, according to Sgt. 1st Class Michael Stoddard, medical evacuation observer/controller who watched as 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry's medics trained on the lane Sept. 14.

Four seven-man medic squads completed the training, which featured intensely realistic carnage and chaos.

A smoke machine blanketed a mock village with a thick white cloud as residents pulled the medics to their wounded loved ones. An insurgent armed with a rocket-propelled grenade lurked in the wood-

line, keeping everyone on edge.

"The medics face a scenario where they've got to move in (tracked ambulances) under indirect fire, while looking for a missing Red Cross convoy, then they get to the village and have to deal with several severe casualties and somewhat hostile villagers," Stoddard said. "This training lane is one of very few anywhere that's specifically for honing medics' skills."

Local resident Cole Young, a Korean War veteran who lost his left leg, played a badly wounded amputee during the scenario.

"I think it's worthwhile for me to come out and do this," Young said. "It helps the Soldiers, and I was a Soldier once too."

In addition to role-players, the medics tried to revive a

dummy capable of reproducing many vital signs. The dummy's vitals are manipulated by an observer/controller in response to the treatment the medics give.

After two wounded civilians were loaded onto ambulances, the medics drove them down a hill to a large field, where a CH-47 Chinook flew in to MEDEVAC the casualties.

Soldiers rushed the stretchers into the back of the gigantic helicopter before it roared away.

"I think it was pretty good training," said Sgt. Wayne Moulton, a 3/7 medic. "It was way more difficult than anything I saw in Iraq. It's best to train to exceed what you're going to see."

Moulton likened the training to the Expert Field Medic Badge course, and said the lane was especially good for newer Soldiers.



Spc. Ben Brody

2nd Bde.

Sept. 23

The hard beams of first light shine down on the convoy Aug. 14; its destination is the small town of Jabar Nahr. Gathered intelligence has pinpointed the tiny village as the location where a high-ranking terrorist in the Al- Qaeda network is hiding. The orders for 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment's 3rd Platoon Brave hearts are clear — cordon off the area, search the village for the wanted suspect and bring him in, alive if possible.

Traveling in the convoy are two Bradleys, two 113's and a Light Mobile Tactical Vehicle. Around nine Soldiers fill the large, pick-up truck-like bed of the LMTV with two more Soldiers in its front cab. As the collection of military vehicles travels down an old dirt road, the Soldiers in the back of the LMTV scan their surroundings diligently, weapons at the ready, for any enemy movement. The convoy comes to an abrupt halt as an old, beat up truck comes into view from around a nearby bend in the road.

Soldiers pile out of the LMTV, training their weapons on the truck. Stopping the suspicious vehicle, they quickly learn that the driver is just an old man traveling to town with some companions.

They were just a bunch of old farmers, but the Solders still had to take precautions, said 1st Lt. Mani A. Wurie, 3rd platoon leader. The platoon didn't know who those men were or what they could have been doing.

The Soldiers of the battalion quickly climb back in the LMTV, steeling their nerve for what could possibly be a much more serious threat in Jabar Nahr.

This mission seems to mirror actual operations in Iraq, but in actuality, this is an exercise being conducted at the Joint Readiness Training Center, designed to give Soldiers the training they will need when they arrive in Iraq in a few short months.

Arriving at Jabar Nahr, the Soldiers are greeted with what seems like mass hysteria. Though it is not clear why, the townspeople do not want the Soldiers in their tiny town.

As Soldiers dismount from their assorted vehicles, angry locals come up to them, shouting and jeering. Wurie has a mission to accomplish, however, and he will not be deterred.

With a small group of Soldiers, he walks over to the nearby police station to see if they know where the Al Qaeda terrorist is holed up. After a short conversation with the police, made possible with the help of the translator the platoon brought along, Wurie and a squad of his men head to a house nearby where the police said the terrorist is hiding.

Greeted on the front porch of the house by what seems like the entire town, Wurie has a lengthy conversation with what must be the owner of the house, all the while the townsfolk becoming more unruly.

While Wurie is engaged in talks with the owner of the house, a truck with three men drives by. Soldiers stop the vehicle at gunpoint. Unsure of whom they are, the Soldiers

Bravo 1-15 learn valuable lessons at STX lane

order the men out of the vehicle and begin doing a search of the truck.

Wurie is still involved in conversation with the owner of the house where the terrorist is purportedly hiding, when a local walks up to second squad leader, Sgt. Jodie Miller, explaining that he has the information on where the Al-Qaeda operative is hiding: the house right across the street.

"The police at the town had given us bogus information," Wurie said. "They were either afraid of the terrorist or they were sympathetic to him."

Miller alerts Wurie of what he has learned and takes off with his squad to the building, going around to the side of the house in an effort to take the enemy by surprise.

Wurie orders the squad of men to secure the perimeter of the house until he gets there with another squad, but faulty communication equipment gives Miller the wrong impression of what Wurie wants.

Communication equipment was a big problem on this mission, said Spc. Jorge Torres, radio transmitter operator for the mission.

Instead of holding their position, Miller's squad approaches the porch on the front of the house and is greeted by the sound of gunfire.

There was an insurgent who just popped out of one of the windows of the house and opened fire, Miller said.

One of Miller's men, Sgt. James Browning, is fatally shot, while another of his men, Pvt. Shane Plunkert, is injured. A local man who was standing on the porch is also fatally shot by the insurgent in the gunfight.

Miller opens fire on the insurgent, injuring him and putting the man out of commission. Miller and his squad go into the house and find the terrorist, unarmed, in the front room of the house.

On the front porch of the house now, Wurie is seeking cover behind an outside-corner wall of the house as he tries to find out what is going on on the radio. Shouts of "we got him" come from inside the house then, suddenly, more gunshots ring out. "LT's down!" shouts Torres and, a few nearby Soldiers rush over to help.

It is later determined that a sniper at a nearby gas station shot Wurie, and that first platoon took the man out of action.

Shot in the arm, but not mortally wounded, Wurie is helped over to a nearby 113 to receive medical attention, as Soldiers lead the wanted terrorist out of the house behind him.

As the Soldiers lead the wanted terrorist away, they walk past a group of mourners standing over the body of the innocent civilian who was caught in the crossfire and shot by the insurgent on the front porch of the house.

Wurie, who has now received medical attention and is well enough to continue on the mission, goes back to the house where the gunplay took place and apologizes to the owner of the house, apparently an innocent civilian, for damages done. It is not clear why the terrorist was hiding in the man's house.

The Soldiers all climb back into their respective vehicles, leaving the town of Jabar Nahr behind them, their



Spc. Ben Brody

Spc. Jorge Torres searches the wanted terrorist after he is captured.

mission successfully completed.

"This is real similar to what we encountered when I was in Iraq," said Spc. Darrell Ambos, comparing the exercise to what he experienced while in Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom 1. "It's really close to reality."

Torres, who has never been to Iraq, said he thinks this exercise is good training for what he might see while in country.

"This exercise will definitely give you an idea of what you might encounter in Iraq and how to deal with it," he said. "Especially in dealing with the people, the locals, I think this exercise will help a lot."

"Overall, we met the mission objectives," Wurie said. "We definitely have learned some lessons so the next time we are involved with something like this, we'll be better prepared."